

# SEATTLE DOWNTOWN PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES TASK FORCE

## TASK FORCE MEETING #3 SUMMARY

### APRIL 1, 2005

#### Task Force Members Present

Ken Bounds, Co-chair  
Kate Joncas, Co-chair  
Catherine Stanford, Co-chair  
B.J. Brooks, Executive Staff  
Eric Friedli, Subcom. Co-Chair  
Anita Woo, Subcom. Co-Chair  
Christopher Williams, Subcom. Co-Chair  
Peggy Emerson, Subcom. Co-Chair  
Tina Bueche

Jordan Royer  
Ron Sher

#### Absent

David Brewster

#### Guest

Gary Johnson, Dept. of Planning & Development

#### Parks & Rec. Staff

Stephanie Jones  
Kevin Bergsrud

#### Consultants

Bonnie Berk  
Michael Regnier

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#### **Welcome and Introductions**

Ken Bounds opened the meeting by welcoming all. Task Force members introduced themselves. Bonnie Berk summarized the meeting's agenda.

#### **Center City Strategy & Downtown Parks**

B.J. Brooks suggested that, rather than take a tour of downtown parks, Task Force members conduct an inspection. This method is used by the Parks Department to assess improvement needs and make overall recommendations. B.J. asked those interested to tell her after the meeting.

B.J. distributed a copy of the Charter and Organizational Chart for the proposed Mayor's Downtown Parks & Public Spaces Executive Board and a set of four color maps related to the Center City planning effort.

B.J. raised the question of whether the Task Force should match the boundaries of its study of downtown parks to those of the Center City planning effort. This would expand the boundaries of downtown to include Uptown, Capital Hill, Pike/Pine, First Hill and China Town/International District. After discussion, the Task Force decided to include only those parks identified in the Downtown Seattle Association's "Our Downtown Parks" study, plus Myrtle Edwards Park, for a total of 21 parks. Denny, Cascade, and Boren/Pike/Pine Parks were deleted from the List of Parks. The Task Force agreed that additional parks within the Center City boundary could be considered at a later time.

Gary Johnson of the Department of Planning and Development discussed the mayor's Center City Strategy, which aims to boost economic development in downtown and surrounding neighborhoods while increasing the variety and attractiveness of housing there. Gary distributed a promotional brochure that includes a timeline for the Strategy.

## **Preliminary Overview of Management Models**

B.J. acknowledged the work of Kate Joncas and Catherine Stanford on “Our Downtown Parks,” a 2002 report of the Downtown Seattle Association’s Downtown Parks Strategy Committee. This study proposed the creation of a Downtown Parks and Recreation Advisory Council consisting of citizen representatives from downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. The Advisory Council would work with Parks staff to develop programming at the neighborhood community centers, provide neighborhood input regarding management and policy decisions, and possibly raise funds.

B.J. next discussed the proposal for a Mayor’s Downtown Parks & Public Spaces Executive Board, developed by Parks staff in 2004. As described in the Chart and Organizational Chart, the Executive Board would comprise two co-chairs, two executive staff and seven representatives of downtown stakeholder groups, with two functional subcommittees. The Executive Board would develop and implement policies to improve downtown parks and serve as a liaison to the Mayor’s Office.

Michael Regnier reviewed management models identified by Projects for Public Spaces (PPS), a national consultancy that has advised Parks regarding Occidental and Freeway Parks in recent years. PPS has identified a range of park management models in use in the U.S., with roles for nonprofit groups ranging from “watchdog” to sole operator. The Task Force discussed some of the examples cited, including Friends of the Parks (Chicago) and Bryant Park (New York City).

## **Maintenance and Operations Subcommittee Report**

Christopher Williams and Peggy Emerson distributed a Briefing Paper and briefed the Task Force on the Operations Subcommittee’s activities.

- The Subcommittee is meeting on a regular basis; the next meeting dates are April 8 and 22 at MID.
- The Subcommittee has begun discussing the benchmarking task, and—in collaboration with the Special Events Subcommittee—which cities should be targeted and which questions asked.
- Discussions at the last meeting covered are reflected in the Briefing Paper. Key issues include safety, maintenance/operations partnerships, and daily maintenance vs. use and re-design of parks.
- The Subcommittee has selected the following cities for study: Portland, Chicago, St. Louis and Toronto. Phone interview responsibilities are as follows:
  - Parks – Stephanie Jones
  - Police – Erik Warner
  - Business/Tourism – Peggy Emerson
  - Residential – Fred Kay
  - Human Services – Alan Painter

Stephanie Jones proposed the Hotel/Motel Tax as a possible source of additional funding. Ken noted that the Mayor and City Council has already taken a position on that issue.

## **Programming and Special Events Subcommittee Report**

Anita Woo distributed a list of the Special Events Subcommittee's members and the minutes of its last meeting, and recounted that meeting's highlights. The focus was on permitting. Virginia Swanson, Special Events Coordinator at the City of Seattle, explained the process and requirements for obtaining a permit. There were several suggestions for a simplifying the process, as well as discussion about making the special events handbook more reader-friendly.

Eric Friedli distributed draft copies of two informational resources: 1) a matrix summarizing the agencies, regulations and fees associated with different types of special event permits; and 2) another matrix arraying the Municipal Codes and Parks Management Guidelines applicable to each downtown park.

## **Tour of Downtown Parks**

Two possible dates have been identified for the tour of downtown parks: either Friday, May 12, 8am-noon or Monday, May 16, 1-5pm.

## **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place from 8 to 10 a.m. on Friday, May 6, in the Boards & Commissions Conference Room on Level 2 at City Hall, 600 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Task Force members are requested to print and bring their own copies of the agenda, to be distributed electronically in advance.